

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 191 948

UD 020 839

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TITLE Corporate Career Demonstration Project: Impact of a Thirteen-Week Training Program on the Personal, Interpersonal, and Academic Skills of Economically Disadvantaged Young Adults.
PUB DATE Feb 80
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southwest Educational Research Association (San Antonio, TX, February, 1980).
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adults; Career Counseling; *Demonstration Programs; *Economically Disadvantaged; *Employment Programs; Entry Workers; Federal Programs; *Industrial Training; Job Skills; *Job Training; Program Descriptions; Program Evaluation
IDENTIFIERS *Texas (Houston)

ABSTRACT

The Corporate Career Demonstration Project is a Federally funded program designed to provide economically disadvantaged young adults with specialized training, counseling and educational experiences. The project's major goal is to prepare these youth for entry level corporate career positions they would otherwise be unable to obtain. Applicants recruited from the Houston area took part in a thirteen week pre internship program designed to develop personal, interpersonal and academic skills. They then entered the internship phase which included matching participants to corporations, interviews with potential employers, and a three stage on-the-job internship. The program was evaluated using observations, interviews, questionnaires, and standardized tests. Data indicated that the program had a significant impact on the personal, interpersonal, and academic skills of the interns. Gains were made in all three areas as a consequence of their training. (MK)

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**CORPORATE CAREER DEMONSTRATION PROJECT:
IMPACT OF A THIRTEEN-WEEK TRAINING PROGRAM ON THE
PERSONAL, INTERPERSONAL, AND ACADEMIC SKILLS OF
ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED YOUNG ADULTS**

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to describe the impact of a thirteen-week training program on the personal, interpersonal, and academic skills of a group of economically disadvantaged young adults who were interns in the Corporate Career Demonstration Project. This paper provides a brief overview of the project, descriptions of the training program's training and counseling components, a brief description of the procedures which were used to assess the program's impact, and a discussion of the results which were obtained.

Overview of the Project

The Corporate Career Demonstration Project (CCDP) is a federally funded program designed to provide economically disadvantaged young adults with specialized training, counseling, and educational experiences. Sponsored by the Office of Youth Programs of the Department of Labor under the provisions of the Youth Employment and Demonstration Project Act of 1977, the CCDP was designed to improve the employability potential of up to 120 eighteen to twenty-one year old high school graduates. The project's major goal is to prepare these carefully selected youth for entry level corporate career positions they would otherwise be unable to obtain. The project's criterion for success is placement in an upwardly-mobile job in the private sector with a minimum starting annual salary of \$9500 by December 1980. The project is a twenty-four month effort which began in January 1979 and will end in December 1980.

A paper presented at the annual meeting of the Southwest Educational Research Association, San Antonio, February 1980.

SP-015-960
WD020839

As a training program, the CCDP provides economically disadvantaged youth with specialized career training, counseling, and educational experiences designed to provide access to and success in entry level career-oriented positions. As a demonstration project, the CCDP is investigating the utility and effectiveness of operating such a venture as a joint effort between the public and private sectors and in utilizing a consortium of educational institutions and business interests.

Applicants were recruited from the Houston metropolitan area. Applicants were carefully screened to identify persons believed to possess that combination of qualities thought to indicate potential for success in the business world. Personal characteristics considered in the screening process included intelligence, academic achievement, writing skill, literacy and computation ability, perseverance, appearance, personality factors, aptitude, self-concept, and vocational interest. Data regarding these qualities were obtained through the use of both formal and informal measures. One hundred and twenty applicants were invited to join the program. Of these, thirty were viewed as "high risk" applicants--persons who did not meet the "potential success" criteria which had been established. Subsequently, 116 applicants accepted an invitation to join the program.

Once admitted to the program, the interns participated in an intensive thirteen-week pre-internship program which is described in the next section of this paper. Following that experience, the interns entered the internship phase. This phase included matching interns to corporate positions, interviews with potential employers and the beginning of a three stage on-the-job internship. During stage one of the internship, the interns worked for twenty-five to forty hours per week under the close supervision of their respective corporate employers and received a salary of at least \$2.00 per hour. At the supervisors' discretion--that is, when he or she felt that the intern was ready and able to assume more responsibility--the intern was promoted to stage two of the internship with an increase in salary and responsibility and a decrease in direct supervision. Similarly, interns move to stage three when their employers feel they are ready to assume nearly total responsibility for their job. Throughout the internship, interns receive a \$2.00 per hour wage supplement to their job salary. Progress through the three stages of the internship cannot exceed sixteen months, but may be significantly less depending on the progress of the individual intern.

Throughout the entire program, interns have and will continue to receive academic, personal, and career counseling services. Counseling services are provided on both individual and group bases and on both regular and on-call bases. Additionally, personal crisis intervention counseling services have been available and utilized frequently.

The Pre-Internship Program

Based on recommendations from representatives of Houston's business community, the pre-internship was designed to focus on the development of the interns' personal, interpersonal, and academic skills rather than the sorts of job-specific and vocational skills that are the typical emphasis of post-secondary youth training programs. Thus, the purpose of the pre-internship program was threefold:

1. To increase interns' personal and interpersonal skills.
2. To increase interns' understanding and acceptance of the norms, values, attitudes, and procedures required to obtain and maintain career-oriented jobs.
3. To improve interns' communication, literacy, computation, study, and life management skills.

To accomplish these goals, the project developed a series of instructional objectives which the interns were expected to achieve. These objectives were organized into six competency areas: communication and literacy skills; computational skills; job orientation skills; life management skills; study skills; and work orientation skills. Throughout the pre-internship, a training component and a counseling component collaborated to provide interns with experiences which would assist them in achieving the objectives specified for each of the six competency areas.

The training program was an intensive, thirteen-week, thirty-five hours per week experience at the University of Houston Central Campus. During this period--June 4 through August 31, 1979, the interns received a stipend of \$100 a week; a travel allowance of up to \$5 a week; and a clothing allowance of \$200; interns with dependent children qualified for a child care allowance of up to \$35 a week. In addition, interns received six semester hours of college credit. All tuition and fees were paid by the project.

The Training Component. The essence of the training program developed to facilitate interns' achievement of the objectives was an individualized education plan based on a diagnosis of academic, personal, and interpersonal needs, interests, motivations, aspirations, and abilities. Though a voluminous amount of standardized data was collected with respect to the interns' personal, interpersonal, and academic skills, this information was of little utility for instructional purposes. Thus, a major priority for the initial stage of the training program was the collection of data for instructional placement. This was accomplished by using a combination of standardized and informal diagnostic measures. An instructional staff of four full-time and eight part-time persons implemented the program. Interns were grouped into three heterogeneous "family" groups.

The communication and literary skills area was the predominant focus of the training program. For each intern, an individualized education plan specifying direct teaching and practice-feedback-reinforcement activities was developed. Interns worked on improving their respective abilities in reading (decoding and comprehension), speaking, listening, and writing. Specifically, they received training in speaking and writing in complete sentences and paragraphs, writing legibly and neatly, proofreading, spelling, vocabulary, punctuation, subject-verb agreement, and grammar. Evidence of improvement in these areas was to be obtained through the use of standardized tests.

Computational skills were also a major focus of the training program. Interns diagnosed as not being competent with respect to the four basic arithmetic algorithms received direct instruction and practice activities in performing book operations with integers, fractions, decimals, and percentages. In addition, all interns received training in the use of calculators and adding machines. Evidence of improvement in this area was to be determined through the use of standardized tests.

Work orientation skill activities--completing applications, preparing resumes, and interviewing--were designed to help interns better present themselves to potential employers. Personnel consultants and managers met with interns to discuss what they looked for in applicants and how to make good impressions on interviewers. Interns practiced interviewing behaviors, resume development, and job application preparation. Interns also received specialized training in appropriate appearance, dress, and personal hygiene. Evidence of growth in

these areas was to be determined through the use of informal means.

Life management needs were also addressed in the training program. Interns received instruction in the following topics: budgeting, income tax forms, banking, insurance, transportation, planned parenthood, social security, child care, and health care and prevention. Evidence of both the utility and effectiveness of this area was to be assessed informally as the interns progressed through the project. No formal data were to be collected with respect to mastery of the objectives in this area.

Study skills were a somewhat minor focus of the training program. Instructional activities focused on improving the interns' note taking, test preparation, and time management skills. Evidence of competence in this area was to be determined informally through feedback from interns.

Due to problems in obtaining sufficient job placement opportunities and the resultant delay in matching and placing interns with corporations and jobs, no specific job orientation training was provided.

The Counseling Component. The history of career counseling has shown remarkable growth from its early emphasis on matching personal traits with appropriate job titles and on providing necessary educational information. Over time, career specialists have come to recognize the importance of developmental, interpersonal, familial and cultural variables upon the process of career selection, development and change. Concurrently, from this widening context for viewing career counseling have come a variety of intervention strategies designed to impact clients' self concepts, clarity of values, interpersonal skills, and decision making based upon awareness of relevant career related information. Clearly, the direction has been towards broadening the definition of career counseling and thus, the scope of life events with which the counselor must be prepared to work.

The Corporate Career Demonstration Project has provided a unique opportunity for trained counselors concerned with career development to work intensively and continuously with a group of young and enthusiastic men and women on many of these career-affecting factors. Perhaps most important, the summer training program afforded a relatively long term of intense, continuous involvement in a variety of settings for counselor-intern interaction. This diversity, from structured groups to individual

counseling to crisis intervention occurred within a format best described as a variant of "milieu therapy", and provided the counselors, and all project staff, with tremendous range and flexibility in their impact upon the interns.

From the outset, the counseling component has seen both proactive and reactive dimensions as important. By proactive is meant the educative, growth enhancing and problem prevention approaches designed to facilitate the interns' journey through the predictable difficulties of the transition from recent high school graduate to corporate trainee. Given the economic and cultural difference between the corporate world and the background of interns, this was considered an especially important aspect; reliance upon patchwork reaction to continual crises was considered a built-in policy of too little, too late for helping the interns secure and maintain advancement level positions. More specifically, these educative/proactive goals included: (1) developing supportive relationships with a group of peers and with one identifiable counselor; (2) facilitating personal awareness of the relationships between personal attributes, skills and goals and the selection of career plans; (3) both providing and helping interns discover the information necessary to make satisfactory career decisions; and (4) developing existant, and teaching new communication strategies necessary for success in interviewing for and surviving in the social world of work. Included here were both verbal and nonverbal strategies in communicating with co-workers and supervisors through asking questions, giving and receiving feedback and understanding personal and cultural differences in communication patterns.

Through movement towards these goals, it was hoped that many potential problems in personal, familial, and occupational functioning would be averted and that the skills and strategies learned would be helpful in dealing with the unavoidable problems which would arise. It was recognized, however, that in addition to these goals, there was a need to provide more traditional problem and crisis-centered "reactive" counseling to assist interns with the variety of developmental concerns and unpredictable crises that their current coping skills leave them unprepared to deal with adequately.

In summary, then, the goals of the counseling component were to work with the entire CCDP staff to help prepare interns in a proactive, educative fashion to deal with anticipated problems and to make available to interns the more traditional, problem-centered, reactive counseling that would also be necessary throughout this stressful period of their lives.

As noted earlier, one of the outstanding features of CCDP was the intensive all-day nature of the thirteen week summer training program. A direct outgrowth of this framework was the opportunity for each counselor (as well as other staff) to continuously observe, interact with and provide feedback and direction to a "family group" of thirty interns with whom he/she developed close relationships. It was within this continual "flow" of counselor-intern contact that more structured, scheduled activities occurred. This provided an essential element for real change--continuity--and thus, an opportunity for counselors (and the other interns themselves) to provide feedback, encouragement, and criticism to individual interns based on real life, behavioral examples from the previous hour, day or week. In a very real sense, the counselors, interns and other staff were living intensively together seven hours per day for thirteen weeks, and it is within this context that other activities occurred (as compared, for example, to groups of students which meet once per week for one and a half hours for counseling activities with no additional contact outside scheduled group time).

The activities used were not, in themselves, particularly new or innovative. To stimulate thinking and exploring for career-relevant information, the interns spent time in the University's career library. Additionally, each intern completed the Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory (SCII). Feedback from the SCII, and several personality measures (the Tennessee Self Concept Scale and the Sixteen Personality Factors Questionnaire) was provided in groups and individual sessions to aid in the early stages of the intern's attempts to integrate career decisions into the broader dimensions of his or her personality and social situations. Role-plays, guided fantasies, and values clarification exercises were also important aspects of this stage.

As the time for beginning job interviews grew nearer, activities which centered upon interview behavior were emphasized. Here, a focus was on repeated video-taped practice interviews, with counselors, interns and all CCDP staff playing all roles (applicant, interns, critiquer). This opportunity for interns to observe and experience the interview process from several perspectives clearly proved invaluable, as confirmed by later evidence from employers.

In addition to these scheduled activities, each family of interns was divided into smaller "rap groups" of eight to ten members. These met regularly, at least once weekly with the family counselor, to process the ongoing activities, work on

difficult themes emerging within the groups (for example, competition-cooperation) and provide a place for individual interns to work on their unique concerns within a group context (for example, conflict between an intern and staff member, choosing between possible job options, communicating with authority figures, dealing with family pressures).

Individual counseling was provided in several ways. Sessions with counselors were periodically scheduled throughout the summer to provide a "time-out" and check on progress and problems. Additionally, individual sessions could be scheduled on an immediate or "as soon as possible" basis when requested by the intern (this included phone contact availability at night, if necessary). Third, and noted earlier as impossible to overestimate in value, was the process of informal, brief and continuing interaction between counselor and interns throughout the days.

To briefly summarize, the counseling component viewed as its "mission" over the summer to work closely with other CCDP staff in providing both educative and problem-centered counseling services to a group of interns struggling to make career-oriented decisions and successfully learn skills necessary for the world of work. Counselor interaction with the interns included structured group activities, ongoing group rap sessions, individually scheduled sessions and informal contact in the developing "milieu" of the entire training program.

Although it is beyond the scope of this paper, brief mention of the counselors' work after the summer program is perhaps appropriate here. As the interns moved into the active job-search and beginning work phase, the counselors' role changed dramatically. As a primary link between interns and project, they became responsible for a great deal of "information flow". The primary form of contact became scheduled groups and crisis-oriented "emergency" telephone contact, with occasionally scheduled individual sessions. This format has continued until the present, although the content of sessions has gradually shifted from crisis-oriented, short-term decision making and problem solving to an emphasis upon longer term career/life planning, and strategies for solving classes of problems (for example, working under a supervisor) rather than a particular problem ("What happened today with Mr. Jones, my current supervisor"). It is envisioned that the close relationships that have evolved between the counselors and their respective group of interns, and among the interns themselves, will continue to provide the basis for the supportive, developmentally oriented counseling program which has been an active, integral component of CCDP.

Procedures

The following section of the paper describes the procedures which were used to assess the effectiveness of the project's summer training program.

Research Questions. In evaluating the effectiveness of the pre-internship training program, the primary question to be answered was: Did the thirteen-week pre-internship program make a significant, positive impact on the personal, interpersonal, and academic skills of the interns who participated. Specifically, there were five questions to which answers were sought:

1. Did the pre-internship have a significant impact on intern communication and literacy skills?
2. Did the pre-internship have a significant impact on intern computational skills?
3. Did the pre-internship have a positive impact on intern work orientation skills?
4. Did the pre-internship have a positive impact on intern life management skills?
5. Did the pre-internship have a positive impact on intern study skills?

Hypotheses. Directional hypotheses were established for the first two of these questions so they might be tested statistically. These hypotheses were:

1. Interns will exhibit statistically significant gains in the area of communication and literacy skills.
2. Interns will exhibit statistically significant gains in the area of computational skills.

The third, fourth, and fifth questions--those having to do with work orientation, life management, and study skills--were examined through less formal procedures.

Subjects. Participants in the program were 116 high school graduates, eighteen to twenty-one years of age from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The ethnic and sexual composition of the sample closely reflected that of unemployed youth in the Houston area. The sample was approximately 70% Black, 23% Hispanic, and 7% white; it was about 65% female and 35% male.

Instruments. Data collection procedures used to measure attitudinal and behavioral changes included naturalistic observations, interviews, questionnaires, and standardized tests. Standardized tests were used to measure mathematical

and verbal achievement; these included: the Fundamental Achievement Series: Verbal and Numerical (FAS), a measure of basic literacy and numerical skills; the Stanford Test of Academic Skills: Reading, English and Mathematics (TASK), a measure of academic achievement; and the Writing Skills Inventory, a measure of writing, punctuation, and spelling abilities. In addition, a battery of measures designed for the Department of Labor by the Educational Testing Service was administered. This battery yields data concerning a wide range of variables including vocational attitude, job knowledge, job holding skills, work relevant attitudes, job seeking skills, sex stereotypes, self esteem, and academic achievement. Unfortunately, at this writing, the Educational Testing Service has not yet shared these data with the project.

Data Collection and Analysis. All tests were administered to the interns by project staff. The pre-testing was completed prior to the beginning of the pre-internship as part of the selection process. Post-testing of the TASK and the Writing Skills Inventory was completed during the last week of the pre-internship; the FAS post-tests were administered approximately three months after the completion of the pre-internship. These data were analyzed using t tests to determine the statistical significance of pre-post gain scores.

Results. Information concerning intern growth was used in an effort to answer the five questions mentioned earlier. While the intent was to address each of these formally, circumstances made it impossible to do so at this time. However, given the data available, it was possible to examine the first two questions statistically and the other three descriptively. The results obtained relevant to each question are discussed in the following section.

The first question was concerned with intern communication and literacy skills. Data relevant to these variables suggested that interns did exhibit gains in the area of literacy and communication skills. On the Writing Skills Inventory, intern mean scores improved from 110.97 on the pre-test to 119.81 on the post-test. Analysis of these data yielded a statistically significant t of 8.89 ($p < .01$) which indicated that the gain made by interns was statistically

significant. Results obtained from an analysis of data from the FAS: Verbal indicated very little change in literacy skills; the mean score for the group rose from 84.78 on the pre-test to 85.14 on the post-test. However, when analyzed using the t test procedures, these gains were not found to be statistically significant. Results obtained from the TASK: Reading and English, also indicated no significant change; pre-post mean scores for reading were 46.39 and 45.53, respectively, while they were 46.23 and 45.24 for English. The results give some support for the acceptance of the hypothesis concerned with intern communication and literacy skills.

The second question focused on intern computational skills. The second directional hypothesis stated that interns will exhibit statistically significant gains in the area of computational skills. Results indicated that this hypothesis was accepted. Mean scores on the TASK: Mathematics improved from 21.76 to 23.45; this gain was statistically significant ($t = 2.31, p < .023$). FAS: Numerical mean scores also showed significant gains ($t = 2.81, p < .006$); the pre-test mean was 51.08 and the post-test mean was 53.27. The second hypothesis--the hypothesis concerned with computational skills--was accepted.

The third question sought to determine whether the program had a positive impact on intern work orientation skills. Intern work orientation skills were assessed through the use of intern self-reports and employer feedback. Throughout the pre-internship, interns responded to numerous questionnaires. Certain questionnaire items sought the intern's perceptions of his or her growth with regard to work orientation skills. These responses have been considered to be indicators of project impact in this area. After only four weeks, ninety-three percent of the interns indicated that the pre-internship had helped them to become more goal directed in relation to their careers and eighty-seven percent indicated that they had made significant progress in understanding the difference between having a job and performing effectively on the job. By the seventh week, eighty-three percent of the interns indicated that they were better prepared to interview for a job than they had been at the beginning of the program and seventy-seven percent reported that the program was helping them master skills necessary for the corporate world.

Reports from employers have been exceptionally positive in this area. When comparing interns with youth who are similar in age and background, the interns are reported to be better interviewees, more work oriented, and better prepared to accept responsibility. On-the-job success as measured by promotion and long-term employment will be another indicator of program impact. Complete information on job success will not be available until the project ends and until follow-up studies are made. However, preliminary indications are that interns are less likely to be fired and more likely to be promoted than are their untrained peers.

The fourth question examined whether the program had a positive impact on intern life management skills. At this point the project has only limited information about its impact on the life management skills of interns. The best available indicators are the responses interns gave on questionnaires administered at the pre-internship's halfway point. In response to questions about life management skills, eighty-eight percent of the interns either agreed or strongly agreed that the previous six weeks of instruction had substantially improved their life management skills. In addition, the project's counseling staff report that many interns appear to be exhibiting growth in this area.

The last question called for an examination of the program's impact on intern study skills. Information which has been used to assess the impact of the program on intern study skills has come primarily from intern self-reports; additionally, one might infer from the academic achievement gains noted earlier that intern study skills may have improved. The assumption, of course, is that since their scores improved there would be good reason to believe that their study skills had also improved. Eighty-five percent of the interns reported an improvement in their study skills on a questionnaire administered at the pre-internship midpoint. Additional insight into the success of the project with regard to the development of intern study skills will be obtained as data from coursework undertaken and completed become available.

Discussion. As noted earlier, the primary assessment concern was: Did the pre-internship program make a significant impact on the personal, interpersonal, and academic skills of the interns in the project? Results obtained from preliminary analysis of available data indicate that the interns, as a consequence of the training they experienced, did make gains in all three areas. Intervening variables--such as maturation--are not likely to account for the significant academic skills growth which was found. It seems totally reasonable to suggest that instructional efforts directed specifically at the development of these skills would seem to be, in a large part, responsible for the gain which resulted. Indeed, it may be argued that post-test scores might have been somewhat depressed as compared to the pre-test scores because of differences in the pre-test and post-test conditions. Pre-tests taken during the competitive atmosphere of the screening process are likely to reflect the interns' best efforts; post-tests taken within the hectic environment surrounding the acceptance of new jobs and the beginning of a new phase for the interns probably did not reflect their best efforts. Inspection of the tests revealed that some interns left large numbers of test questions unanswered and marked whole series of questions with similar responses; some interns did not use all of the allotted time and left early.

In spite of these difficulties, the project's impact on the interns is demonstrable. Statistically significant gains were found in several of the academic skill areas. Most interns reported making substantial gains in personal and interpersonal skill areas. Employers have attested to the effectiveness of the training and counseling provided by the project. Further data collection and analysis efforts will make it possible to better assess the pre-internship's impact and suggest areas for further exploration.